

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An inflatable curtain for protecting the occupants of an automobile, the inflatable curtain comprising:

- a peripheral region;
- an inflatable portion having a length; and

a first stiffening element positioned along portion of the peripheral region, wherein the first stiffening element is a stay, wherein the first stiffening element has an elongated shape oriented substantially parallel to the inflatable portion to reduce flexure of the portion of the peripheral region during deployment, thereby increasing uniformity of inflation time of the inflatable portion along the length.

Claim 2 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the inflatable portion further comprises an inflation inlet for communication with an inflator.

Claim 3 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the stiffening element is substantially planar.

Claim 4 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the first stiffening element remains substantially stationary with respect to the length of the inflatable curtain when the inflatable portion is inflated.

Claim 5 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, further comprising a second stiffening element positioned along at least a portion of the peripheral region.

Claim 6 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the first stiffening element has a length greater than its width, the inflatable curtain has a length greater than its width, and the length of the first stiffening element is oriented substantially parallel to the length of the inflatable curtain.

Claim 7 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the peripheral region comprises an upper part, and the first stiffening element is positioned along the upper part.

Claim 8 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the stiffening element is formed as an integral portion of the inflatable curtain.

Claim 9 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the stiffening element is securely fastened to the inflatable curtain.

Claim 10 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 9, wherein the stiffening element is a plastic stay.

Claim 11 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 9, wherein the first stiffening element is stitched to the peripheral region.

Claim 12 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the inflatable curtain is tetherless.

Claim 13 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, further comprising a tether.

Claim 14 (cancelled)

Claim 15 (currently amended): An inflatable curtain for protecting the occupants of an automobile, the inflatable curtain comprising:

a peripheral region;

an inflatable portion; and

a first substantially planar stiffening element positioned along a portion of the peripheral region, independent of attachment of the inflatable curtain to the automobile, wherein the first stiffening element is a stay, wherein the first stiffening element has an elongated shape oriented substantially parallel to the inflatable portion to make the portion of the peripheral region more resistant to flexure than the inflatable portion, thereby enhancing and to enhance inflation of the inflatable portion.

Claim 16 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, further comprising a second stiffening element positioned along at least a portion of the peripheral region.

Claim 17 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the first stiffening element has a length greater than its width, the inflatable curtain has a length greater than its width, and the length of the first stiffening element is oriented substantially parallel to the length of the inflatable curtain.

Claim 18 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the peripheral region comprises an upper part, and the first stiffening element is positioned along the upper part.

Claim 19 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the stiffening element is formed as an integral portion of the inflatable curtain.

Claim 20 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the stiffening element is securely fastened to the inflatable curtain.

Claim 21 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the stiffening element is a plastic stay.

Claim 22 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the first stiffening element is stitched to the peripheral region.

Claim 23 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, wherein the inflatable curtain is tetherless.

Claim 24 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 15, further comprising a tether.

Claim 25 (cancelled)

Claim 26 (currently amended): An inflatable curtain for protecting the occupants of an automobile, the inflatable curtain comprising:

a peripheral region having an upper part;
an inflatable portion comprising an inflation inlet for communication with an inflator; and
a first stiffening element attached exclusively and directly to at least a portion of the upper part via stitching to enhance inflation of the inflatable portion, wherein the first stiffening element is a stay.

Claim 27 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 26, further comprising a second stiffening element positioned along at least a portion of the peripheral region.

Claim 28 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 26, wherein the stiffening element is formed as an integral portion of the inflatable curtain.

Claim 29 (previously presented): The inflatable curtain of claim 26, wherein the stiffening element remains substantially stationary with respect to the length of the inflatable curtain when the inflatable portion is inflated.

Claim 30 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 29, wherein the stiffening element is a plastic stay.

Claim 31 (previously presented): The inflatable curtain of claim 29, wherein the first stiffening element has a length greater than its width, wherein the length of the first stiffening element is oriented substantially parallel to the length of the inflatable curtain.

Claim 32 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 26, wherein the inflatable curtain is tetherless.

Claim 33 (original): The inflatable curtain of claim 26, further comprising a tether.

Claim 34 (previously presented): The inflatable curtain of claim 1, wherein the inflatable curtain has a lower middle portion, a lower rear corner, and a lower front corner, wherein the first stiffening element is positioned to expedite inflation of at least one of the lower rear and lower front corners with respect to inflation of the lower middle portion.

Claim 35 (previously presented): The inflatable curtain of claim 34, wherein the first stiffening element is attached directly to one of an upper front corner and an upper rear corner of the inflatable curtain.